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BOOK REVIEWS

Rachel. By ANGELINA W. GRIMKÉ. Boston, Mass., The Cornhill Company, 1920. Pp. 96. Price, \$1.25.

Miss Grimké's drama of *Rachel* is a beautiful and poetic creation. She has produced this effect by a literary instinct which is fine and mainly cultivated. Its native vigor carries the reader past an occasional crudity, which it would seem to be hypocritical to notice. The sweep of passion in the drama is elemental. She has connected the story of a girl-woman with the most woeful of earthly tragedies, namely the crime of a great nation against one of its component parts.

The feelings expressed in the drama, though elemental, are uttered in the terms of modernity. The structure of the drama is modern, and yet there is something in the figure and movement of *Rachel* herself which reminds the present writer of *Antigone*. We do not see *Antigone* before the hour when she has chosen to meet the doom that man's law has decreed should she perform the task that human love and religious faith have enjoined upon her. *Antigone* goes to the death of her body declaring that in the Infinite there is a longer time for love than there is on earth.

But we do see *Rachel* before the ultimate choice has come to her. She is a gay and happy girl. The drama proceeds to the hour when she too must choose between the issues of earthly love and those which reach into eternity. She learns from her mother, Mrs. Loving, that ten years before, they all lived in the South and her father and her half brother were lynched. Briefly summarized, this is Mrs. Loving's story. As a young widow with a boy seven years old, she had married an educated man of color. She was a person of color herself. Mr. Loving owned and edited a paper in which he wrote on behalf of the people of color. A Negro innocent of all crime was murdered by a mob in that region. Mr. Loving denounced the murder and the murderers in his paper. He received an anonymous letter apparently written by an educated person, threatening him with death, if he did not retract what he had said. In the next issue of his paper he published an equally stern arraignment of the lynchers and their crime.

That night a dozen masked men broke into his house. Mr. Loving had a revolver. He defended his life and his home. Mrs. Loving tried to close her eyes. She could not. She saw all that happened in her bedroom. Four of the masked assailants fell. "They did not move any more . . . after a little while." Then she saw her husband dragged out of the room. Her older boy, George, tried to help his stepfather. He was dragged out also. She went to the bedside of her two younger children. They were asleep. Rachel was smiling. The mother knelt down and covered her ears. When at last she let herself listen, she heard only the tapping of the branch of a pine tree against the side of the house. She did not know at first that it was *the tree*.

She fled with her two little children to the North. Those children had never before this day of revelation known how their father had died. The shadow of white cruelty to the body and souls of black folks had darkened somewhat over their lives in the North, but still they had been frolicsome and loving young creatures. Now they begin to realize the full significance of "race prejudice."

Rachel speaks to her mother: "Then, everywhere, everywhere throughout the South, there are hundreds of dark mothers who live in fear, terrible, suffocating fear, . . . whose joy in their babies . . . is three parts pain. . . . The South is full of . . . thousands of little boys who one day may be, and some of whom will be lynched." "And the babies, the dear, little, helpless babies . . . have *that* sooner or later to look to. They will laugh and play and sing and grow up, and perhaps be ambitious,—just for that."

"Yes, Rachel," answers her mother. The girl is one of those rare, feminine creatures whose soul and body are framed for maternity. In one swift rush of realization and of premonition, she comprehends all that the doom upon her race must eventually mean to her; she utters the cry of Africa's heart in America. "It would be more merciful to strangle the little things at birth. . . . This white Christian nation has set its curse upon the most beautiful, . . . the most holy thing on earth . . . motherhood."

Let us consider the historic background forth from which Miss Grimké has drawn her story. How do its incidents compare with known facts? In 1844, Massachusetts sent Judge Hoar to South Carolina to look after the interests of Massachusetts citizens of color there. The mob spirit showed itself so violently that this father of the future Senator was obliged to leave the South. More

careful investigation into hidden causes for lynching would doubtless disclose more cases when educated men have been threatened or actually murdered. The rope with which to hang Wendell Phillips was actually carried into the hall where he was to speak. And the concerted plan had been to hang him on Boston Common.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has investigated and published statistics showing that from 1889 to 1918 in the United States, 702 whites and 2522 blacks have been lynched, and that 11 of these victims were white women and 50 were women and girls of color. 6 whites and 142 Negroes were lynched for "no crime."

A few instances may well be cited. After some race riots in 1894 in which crimes had been committed on both sides, MacBride, "a respectable Negro of Portal, Georgia, was beaten, kicked, and shot to death for trying to defend from a whipping at the hands of a crowd of white men, his wife who was confined with a baby three days old." No offence on the part of the wife or the three days old baby is recorded, but the one of that helpless couple who could speak may have made about the riots remarks which disturbed the delicate sensibilities of these southerners who are so discriminating in their "chivalrous treatment" of women.

In 1895 a Negro in Texas was killed by a mob because he was accused of riding over a little white girl and seriously injuring her. "Later developments proved that the mob murdered the wrong negro." In 1899 in Louisiana "an attempt had been made to assault a white woman." Afterwards one Michael Curry saw a large Negro wandering in a field. For no reason whatever he decided that that man had been the assailant. Some white would-be murderers were quickly got together and shot the black man to death. Then it was discovered that he was an escaped lunatic, whose recent history did not square with the theory that he was the assailant.

In Georgia there was in 1911 a Negro woman described as "a good reliable servant" in her normal condition, but who was subject to attacks of violent mania. She killed a white woman in such an attack, as many years ago poor English Mary Lamb killed her own mother. The world knows with what chivalry her brother Charles shielded her through life. This Negro native of Georgia had once been adjudged to be a fit subject for an insane asylum; but the State institution was crowded and she was not then or now

taken into it. Georgia took care of her in an easier way. Its lynchers put her into an automobile and placed a rope around her neck, fastened it to a tree, and started the car from under her, and left her to die. No arrests followed. But why mention that fact in this case? There are very few instances of mob murder when white murderers have ever been arrested.

In Oklahoma in 1914, two white men assaulted a seventeen-year-old girl of color. Her screams brought her brother to the rescue. There was a fight. He killed one of the men. The next day a mob came to the house in search of the brother. They could not find him so they killed the girl. In 1915 a sheriff in Georgia was murdered, and straightway five Negroes were killed. About a year later it was learned that all five were innocent. Sometimes "race prejudice" is given as the reason why certain Negroes were lynched. That probably means that in no such instance had the lynched Negro committed any offence, or at most none deserving the death penalty by any legal process.

The next historical question, which Miss Grimké's drama raises, was pertinently put to the present writer: "Was an educated, high-toned man like Loving ever lynched?" The answer as to probabilities is easily made. The American impulse towards mob-murder has always been strong whenever and wherever the rise of the Negro, either free or enslaved, has been considered vitally obnoxious to the community. In the slavery days, Northern mobs prepared often to kill William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and other Abolitionists, but they were foiled every time except when, in 1836, the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, a white Northerner, was killed in Alton, Illinois, for denouncing, in his own paper, the burning to death of a Negro in Missouri. It was supposed, however, that the men who shot Lovejoy were Missourians and not Illinoisans.

The southern temper as to the educated Negroes was certainly voiced to a large extent, when in the eighties, the librarian of a large library in a southern town made answer to a question asked by a northern visitor: "Oh, no, the colored people don't come here to take out books. We don't believe in social equality, you know." And the Negro teacher in that town answered thus another Northerner's question: "Why don't you go there and ask for a book?" "I shouldn't like to do that, if I am going on living here."

In 1898 there were some terrible race riots in North Carolina.

Two well educated Negroes owned and edited a small paper. Like the black Loving in Miss Grimké's drama, like the white historical Lovejoy, sixty-two years before, they printed editorials on the side of the Negroes. They were threatened. They fled and escaped pursuit. It is safe to assume that, had they been caught, they would have been lynched.

About a year ago, John R. Shillady, a white man, was engaged on a peaceful mission in Texas on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, whose agent he was. Prominent white citizens assaulted and beat him severely. It has always been the same story; white or black, educated or ignorant, in every part of this country the defenders of the Negroes have been liable to the decree or the abuse of the mob.

Still fresh is the memory of that shameful day when a white mob fired the Omaha jail where a Negro, still unconvicted of crime, was confined. He helped several of the other prisoners to get in line to leave the prison in safety, and then went down the steps himself to the mob which grabbed him and killed him. Meanwhile the ruffians had seized the Mayor of the town as he was on his way to try to enforce law and order. They hanged him, but somebody cut the rope before he was quite dead. There was strong evidence to show that the murdered Negro was innocent.

We come next to the question: What sort of men are they who make up these murderous mobs? Wendell Phillips once said, as to the North, that he had faced many mobs between the seaboard and the Mississippi, and that he never saw one that did not show that it was inspired if not actually led by "respectability and what called itself education." It is harder to know exactly what is the personnel of southern lynching parties. But a close study of known facts shows that "respectability and what calls itself education" has countenanced, approved, and participated in a large proportion of these orgies of horror. And the southern approval has developed in the South a most abhorrent type of white woman who holds up her babies to see a black man cut and burned to death. Miss Grimké's historical accuracy is unimpeachable when she allows "church members" to lynch Loving and his stepson.

George W. Cable said to the present writer in the winter of 1888-89, "You are right, the southerners do not want the Negroes to be educated." Miss Grimké, inferentially, dates her lynching somewhere in the decade of the nineties. The mass of black, brown,

and olive-tinted ignorance at that time in the South, was appalling. It is appalling now—largely through the governing white man's fault. But still there were in the South at that time and before then many colored people who had obtained the rudiments of education and some who might be truthfully called well educated. Some of these became known to the whole country; but there might easily have been obscure ones like Loving scattered in many communities.

Now ordinary critics are sure to cry out against my analysis of the historical situation and remind me of Booker Washington. They will say, "He was not lynched. He was accepted. Any Negro like him is safe, if he behaves himself." I answer that I have no fancy for mob murder or torture of any human being, ignorant or wise, good or bad. There are, moreover, other answers to the riddle of that great constructive educator's career. One is creditable to the white southerners. They are not all eager for Negro blood. There is yet another solution. Booker Washington surrendered many of the Negro's rights to southern prejudices. The South liked that surrender. Northern philanthropists occasionally liked it well enough to give money for purposes which would tend to make the Negro useful in the ways the whites wanted him to be, and yet to insure him a little intellectual comfort in his life.

To return to the direct consideration of Miss Grimké's Rachel; we see the girl, from the hour that she learns what things are done, and may be done, in the South to the dusky sons and daughters of America, she lives under a cloud—a sense of doom. Yet the cloud breaks now and then. She loves so much, and especially she loves so many little children, that she cannot fail to be happy sometimes. She also comes to love a man, and all the possibilities of marriage and motherhood open radiantly before her. But the shadow falls denser than ever upon her. She sees, even in the North, the grown men of her race, no matter how well educated, seldom able to get work befitting their ability. All this sort of thing would not happen in every northern town but every careful observer knows that such things do happen in many northern villages and cities.

Little children flock around her, drawn by the magic of her incarnated motherliness. She sees them ill-treated by their white school mates. She has adopted a little boy, Jimmy, and she sees

him suffer. She sees a little girl, very black and ugly, but still a child, who has been frightened almost into idiocy by white children. Finally Rachel's ears are so filled with the sound of real wailing that her brain reels with the thought of the crying children all over the land, and at last voices come to her from the infinite spaces. Voices of unborn babies, the little babies who were meant to be born unto her. . . . They were begging her never to bring them into earthly existence. Now, like Antigone, she makes her choice; to soothe a ghostly pain no matter what may be her earthly doom.

Her lover leaves her. She cries after him once, as if to call him back. Then she ceases that cry, knowing that her fate is fixed, and her vow never to be a mother on earth is irrevocable. She begins to talk as to the pre-existent ghosts of her unborn children, and all the while the crying of her adopted child mingles fitfully with the wailing that seems to come to her from the caverns of the unknown regions.

The drama would probably have to be remoulded for use in the regular theatre, yet it is the present writer's opinion that to create the part of Rachel on the stage might well allure any actress who possesses the most delicate and passionate genius.

LILLIE BUFFUM CHACE WYMAN.

Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent, recorded from the Singing and Sayings of C. Kamba Simango, Ndaui Tribe, Portuguese East Africa and Madikane Cele, Zulu Tribe, Natal, Zululand, South Africa. By NATALIE CURTIS BURLIN. New York, G. Schirmer, 1921. Pp. 170.

This work as its title imports does not cover a wide field of investigation and it was not done in Africa. The object of the author is to introduce Europeans and Americans to the soul of the African, who has too long been regarded merely as an object for exploitation. Believing that in the folk-music of a people is imaged the real soul, the author has made in this field researches, the results of which have been herein set forth. The aim finally is to show that the human family is near of kin and that basic emotions of love, of sorrow, of rejoicing and of prayer, whether men be primitive or advanced, white, yellow, red or black, are the same root-feelings planted in us all.

The book begins with a rather long introduction, discussing the geography, history, and institutions of Africa. Much space is here